

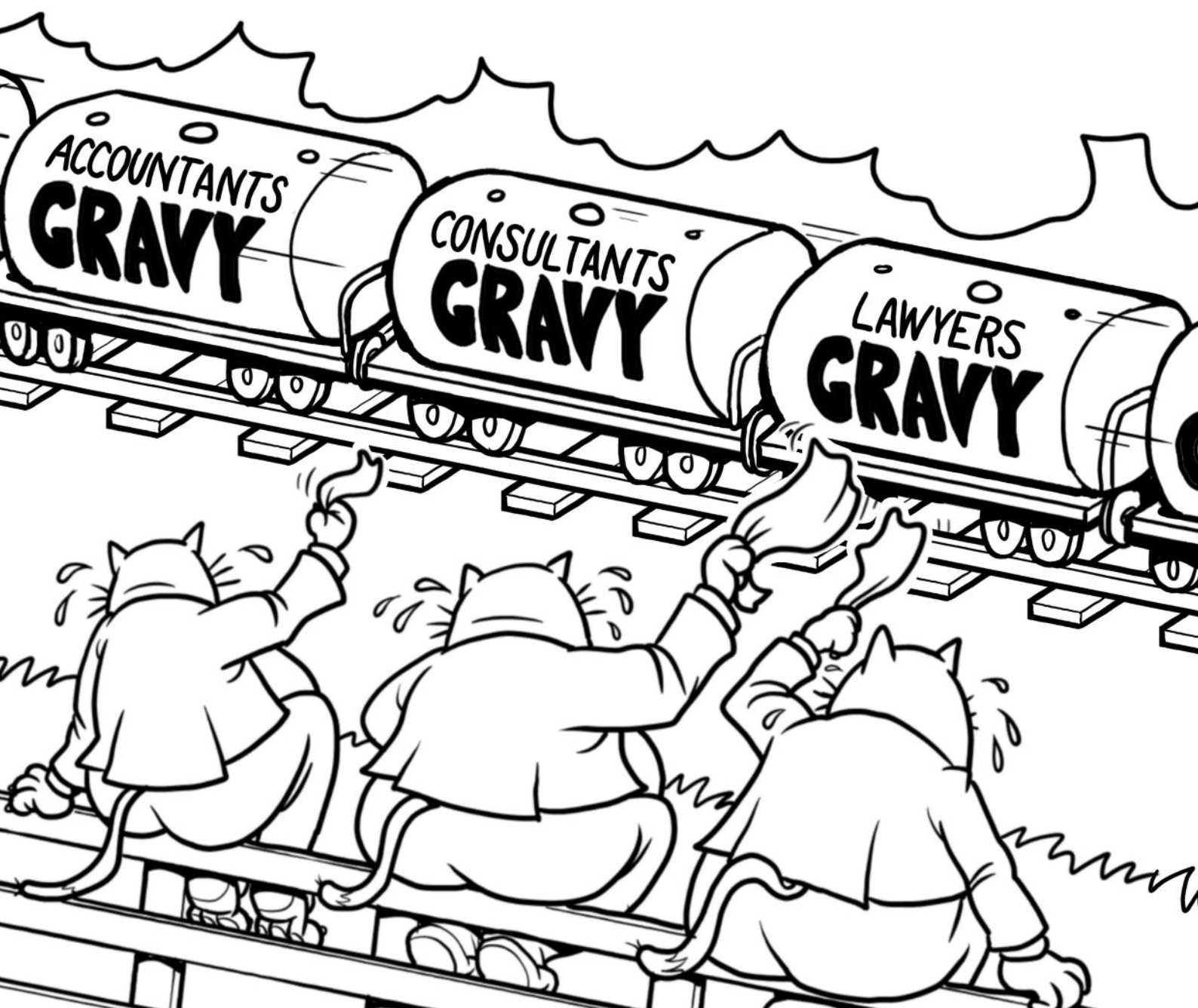


ASLEF

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JOURNAL
APRIL 2012

Rail Reform Welcomed



5 Proof of need for
drivers on Tube trains

12 Looking back at
flexible rostering strike

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Suddenly, nothing much happened ...

S UDDENLY, nothing much happened ... Many ASLEF activists have been waiting for months, in various degrees of excitement and anxiety, for the government's reaction to the McNulty report. Then suddenly on the eighth day of last month – nothing much happened.

I thought I must have missed something, so it was a relief when the rail expert and MP Kelvin Hopkins said he felt exactly the same way. 'The minister, Justine Greening, spoke at some length – but she didn't say anything!' he told me.

By contrast, Maria Eagle did have something to say. 'The interests of private train companies are being put before those of passengers and the principle that we established in government of a clear separation of infrastructure and maintenance from private profit is being abandoned, for the first time giving private train companies the whip hand over Network Rail.'

Kelvin, typically, got to the very heart of the debate about the future of rail. He said that Sir Roy McNulty had concluded that our railways are up to 40% more expensive to run than continental railways. 'So I suggested to him that the simple and obvious difference between them is that they are publicly owned and integrated and ours are privatised and fragmented. We will not overcome our problems or reduce costs until our railways, too, are publicly owned and integrated.'

Justine Greening waffled responses involving selling train tickets in pubs and 'Oysterisation', and accused the Labour Party of not having an alternative. She plainly didn't hear Ed Miliband when he spelled it out. He said, 'It is wrong for public money to support train companies during loss-making periods while taxpayers benefit little in profitable times.'

That's the message we need to rally around. We don't want the profit motive driving the rail network – and to re-introduce it into Network Rail would border on the criminal. Rail is a service: and it's our business to make sure it is recognised as such.

Mick Whelan, General Secretary



4



17

News

4

- Grayrigg 'More like history than justice' 4
- Tube incident 'highlights need for drivers' 5
- Union sympathy with Grayrigg family 6

Features

8

- Fears for CICA as Clarke seeks to change law 8
- Put the celebrations for Burma on hold ... 9
- Workfare? It's not fair, and never was ... 11
- Three decades on, we look back at the 1982 flexible rostering dispute 12
- Key Worker: The line that Leeds an Oz to Ashford! 14
- National Officer Andy Morrison – an advocate, an activist, a man of honour 17
- Railway maps are 'things of useful beauty' 22

Regulars

15

- Keeping Track 15
- Obituaries 16 & 17
- Branch News 18 & 19
- Letters 20-21
- Prize Crossword/Legal services for members 23



12



6



14

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**More than
just a union**

Grayrigg 'More like history than justice'

Mick Whelan, general secretary of the train drivers' union ASLEF, says the length of time between the Grayrigg derailment and the court case that began today 'smacks more of a leisurely history lesson than a genuine striving for justice.'

'On top of which, I can safely predict that the outcome will be what it always is – a meaningless fine and a gently slapped wrist. I feel annoyed and frustrated by it – but imagine how the family of Margaret Masson must feel.'

Mrs Masson was the only person to die at Grayrigg when a Virgin Pendolino train travelling from London to Glasgow crashed on 23 February 2007. It derailed at 95 mph after hitting a faulty set of points. In all, 86 passengers and two crew members were injured.

Network Rail is charged with breaching health and safety laws in proceedings started by the rail regulator, the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR).

It has been shown that the derailment resulted from a failure of stretcher bars to hold the moveable rails a set distance apart when the points were operated. An investigation by the Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) blamed the immediate cause of the derailment as the poor maintenance of the failed points.

The maximum penalty the lower court can impose for the offence is a fine of £20,000, but a Crown Court can impose unlimited fines.

Tesco moves freight on rail into Wales

Tesco has added a fourth freight on rail route in Wales, adding to the three it currently operates from Daventry to Thurrock, Daventry to Livingston, and Livingston to Inverness. The new rail service will run from the distribution centre at Daventry to the Wentloog terminal in South Wales and serve its Magor distribution centre. It will begin with 20 containers, increasing to



Tesco's latest move to freight on rail is a Welsh route, pictured here at Felixstowe

34 by the summer.

Altogether the four services will take 72,000 journeys off the road, saving around 24,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions a year

The train is operated in partnership with Direct Rail Services and Stobart Rail and is branded in the Tesco logo style reading 'Less CO2 Rail'.

APOLOGY FOR LONDON MIDLAND TWEETS

London Midland was forced to apologise last month after its Twitter account told a commuter to 'go to the pub' after a suspected suicide at a Birmingham train station.

A London Midland member of staff posted the suggestion on the social networking feed, after being asked by a passenger about likely delays.

The company tweet told them, 'Go to the pub – things will be rubbish for at least the next hour.'

When another commuter asked if the victim was OK, the company tweet said, 'Nope' and later told another user, 'Can't stop someone jumping off a platform in front of a train I'm afraid.'

OFCOM says Clarkson comments were acceptable

The media watchdog Ofcom says Jeremy Clarkson's comments that striking public sector workers 'should be executed in front of their families' was not in breach of broadcasting rules. 'Then what on earth do you have to say to breach their rules?' asks ASLEF's general secretary Mick Whelan.

'Ofcom said the remarks were 'potentially offensive,' Mick says. 'Potentially! What is up with these people? Of course it was offensive – almost as offensive as it was stupid.'

The public sector union Unison made a formal complaint at the time of

Clarkson's outburst and invited him to spend a day with a healthcare assistant. Unsurprisingly the rich right-wing presenter has not taken up the invitation.

But while Mick condemns Ofcom for a 'soft' decision on a serious subject, he says at least they have offered an opinion, which is more than the BBC has done in respect of the formal ASLEF complaint. The union reported Clarkson saying, 'I do sometimes use the train to come to London but it always stops in Reading. It's always because somebody has jumped in front of it and somebody has burst.'



Mick pointed out that 'this abhorrent view shows contempt and disrespect for the victims of the families of suicides as well as an utter disregard for the welfare of railway staff, and especially train drivers, who experience these incidents.'

No reply has been forthcoming.

'We appear to have silenced the BBC,' Mick says. 'Even Alastair Campbell didn't manage that!'

DB Schenker plan for 'carbon free' trains

DB Schenker says its plans to introduce 'carbon free' rail freight services that use trains hauled by electric locomotives.

It is to work with Renewable Energy Systems (RES) to build three wind turbines on its land at Margam in South Wales. RES is discussing the scheme with Neath and Port Talbot Council and says it could provide renewable energy for the rail network.

The energy generated by the turbines could be enough to power a 'green fleet' of DB Schenker Rail UK's Class 92 electric locomotives, operating from London to Scotland on the West and East Coast Main Lines and to Wales on the Great Western Railway once that route is electrified.

The electricity would be sold to Network Rail for use in the overhead power cables and proposes to provide 'carbon free' rail freight services in the UK by the end of the year.

Tube incident 'highlights need for drivers'

An incident on the Jubilee line on Sunday evening has underlined how the Mayor of London's obsession with driverless trains is 'irresponsible, callous and opportunist' according to ASLEF general secretary Mick Whelan.

On Sunday evening a child about five years old fell between the train and the platform at Finchley Road as he ran to try to board a train that was ready to depart. All the automatic devices in place showed the platform was clear and it was safe for the tube train to depart. But the driver, on a final visual safety check saw a tiny hand reaching up from the track. The train remained in position and a young life was saved.

'The Mayor has been playing politics with the issue of driverless trains,' Mick says. 'He thinks he is currying favour with voters with this stand. How many votes are a young child's life worth? How would he explain to those watching horrified parents that his proposal is a good one?'

'On Sunday all the automatic devices showed the platform was clear. Only a driver could have averted a potential tragedy.'

'Boris Johnson is wrong to continue to push his policy for driverless tube trains when it can threaten the lives of London's travelling public. I want him to accept that it is a mistake.'

'Anyone can make an error, but



Finchley Road Station

only an irresponsible person will persist with it.'

○ Mick Whelan later dismissed Boris Johnson's vow to introduce driverless trains 'to harm transport unions' as 'empty rhetoric, hot air and another broken election pledge in the making.'

Mick says, 'Boris knows as well as I do that he can't do it and he won't do it.'

The union says that if he was to introduce driverless tube trains, the number of deaths on the Underground would amount to corporate slaughter. 'You can only have driverless trains without compromising safety if you have a fail-safe, utterly reliable, infallible signalling system and trains that don't break down. Otherwise you expose travellers to a life lottery every time they go down the tube,' Mick points out.

'The Mayor is talking tosh.'

TUC Diploma in Contemporary Trade Unionism

Northern College is running a course for union officers and experienced reps leading to a level 2 TUC Diploma in Contemporary Trade Unionism.

It involves twelve residential study weekends (roughly one a month) with online distance learning supported by a college tutor. To qualify you need to have completed at least two union courses and have the application endorsed by ASLEF.

Northern College specialises in supporting adults returning to study after a long break as well as those who have no formal qualifications. The course, including accommodation is free for most students. For more details, go to <http://april12ctudip.wordpress.com>

Newsinbrief

○ EMT ACTION AVERTED

ASLEF members have been advised that discussions have taken place with East Midlands Trains and proposals have been agreed to settle the current dispute.

In view of this, industrial action scheduled for Friday 9 March did not take place.

○ RMS 500 CLUB DRAW

The February winning number in the RMS 500 Club draw was 11. It is held by John Wragg and the prize money is £206, reports RMS Committee member Alan Taylor.

○ PROMISES ON SECURITY, SPACE AND PARKING FOR EAST ANGLIA

The Dutch-owned Abellio Greater Anglia took over East Anglia's train services last month, promising better security, more space and a freeze on car park charges.

○ TAX SERVICE NETS £446K IN REFUNDS

The union-backed tax code review has now been used by 14,503 members who have secured an average tax refund of £210.25. The total recovered since the service began now stands at £446,781. The firm we work with is PTS (Marketing) LLP, Labyrinth House, 43-47 Middle Hillgate, Stockport, Cheshire SK1 3DG

○ DBS IM STRIKES CALLED OFF

Industrial action planned by ASLEF train drivers working for DB Shenker Infrastructure Monitoring on 8 March was been called off when the EC decided to put an improved offer to the members in a membership referendum.



ELECTRIFY LINE TO SWANSEA SAYS UNION

The argument for electrifying the rail line from Swansea to Paddington has been greatly boosted by a Welsh Affairs Committee report which calls on the government to announce plans to extend electrification of the Great Western Main Line to Swansea. It goes on to say, 'We believe a strong economic case has been made for electrification of the line to Swansea and we welcome and support the Secretary of State for Wales in calling for it to happen.'

Swansea East MP Sian James said, 'There have been several references from Government about the need for a robust business case – but we saw little of this same hard line approach when ministers confirmed details of the high speed HS2 network in England which included a number of very costly amendments.'

Sian intends to take up the argument personally with ministers in coming weeks and Mick Whelan assured her of ASLEF support, saying, 'The Welsh Affairs Committee report identified Wales as having one of the worst records in the UK in terms of attracting inward investment – and it confirmed that the Welsh transport infrastructure has been under-funded for a number of years. We have campaigned for electrification to be extended to Swansea for over a year, and will continue to do so.'

Union sympathy with Grayrigg family

On the very day last month that Network Rail admitted it was guilty of safety breaches that led to the death of Mrs Masson at Grayrigg, its chief executive at the time of the crash, John Armitt, was feted at Buckingham Palace and given a knighthood.

'What message does this send to company bosses about their responsibilities for safety in the workplace?' asks Mick Whelan. 'It is a smack in the teeth for the family and the whole industry, including train drivers.'

'The message is that if safety is

ignored, senior managers will walk away without sanction or a stain on their name. They can still pick up a knighthood even if their company freely admits it is responsible for a death.

'This is a tragic day for the Masson family, an affront to

everyone who works in our industry and warning to every working person in the UK.'

Mrs Masson's son George Masson has called for Mr Armitt, chairman of the Olympic Delivery Authority, to be immediately stripped of his honour.

Do you know your branch history?

ASLEF Head Office is occasionally (but regularly) asked by branches for the date their branch was officially constituted, usually when a branch member suspects an important anniversary is about to arrive but no-one knows exactly when.

As ASLEF was established in 1880 you will forgive us if our records are a little incomplete, to say the least, and this search can prove very difficult.

However, we do have a near-complete

collection of the union's journal from 1892 when it was called the Locomotive Engineers and Firemen's Journal.

Mick Holder, who works at head office, is trying to compile a list of exact dates – and this is where you could help.

If you know the date your branch was constituted, please let Mick (holderm@aslef.org.uk) know and it will be recorded for posterity and future reference at head office and on the union web site.



Train assault MP calls for more CCTV

John Woodcock, the Labour MP for Barrow, was attacked on a Lancaster to Barrow train last month. The shadow transport minister was assaulted after challenging a group of men who were making racist and sexual comments.

He has now hit out at

plans to cut back on CCTV.

The government wants to restrict the use of CCTVs under the Protection of Freedoms Bill, but the MP, whose alleged attackers were caught on camera, wants buses trains and stations to be exempt.



ASLEF at Welsh Labour

ASLEF's delegation to the 2012 Welsh Labour Party Conference in Cardiff consisted of District Organiser for District 7 Stan Moran and John Boreham (Carmarthen).

John moved ASLEF's motion urging the Welsh Labour Government to invest more in the country's railways and calling for Labour to consider a more accountable not-for-dividend ownership structure for the Welsh franchise which was unanimously accepted. Stan raised the issue of the retirement age for train drivers with the Welsh Transport Minister Carl Sargeant while the delegation also held a range of informal meetings with Welsh MPs, Assembly Members and Councillors as well as officials from other trades unions

ASLEF's delegation to the 2012 Scottish Labour Party consisted of District Organiser Kevin Lindsay, Jim Lafferty (Motherwell) and Rab Wickstead (Edinburgh No 2). National Organiser Simon Weller deputised for the General Secretary who was unable to attend.

Jim Lafferty moved the union's motion on the future of Scottish rail services and urged Labour to keep Scotland's railway in one piece. The ASLEF delegation lobbied numerous MPs, MSPs and councillors on issues of concern to the union, particularly the current Scotrail consultation. Kevin Lindsay was also re-elected to Scottish Labour's Executive Committee.



Rail expansion in Israel mooted

Israel's government last month announced plans to build the first rail link between its Mediterranean and Red Sea coasts, offering a new Asia-Europe trade route to compete with the Suez Canal.

It also envisages a passenger line through the Negev desert which for the first time would put Israel's southern Red Sea resort of Eilat a two-hour train ride from Tel Aviv, 350 kilometres (220 miles) away.



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Fears for CICA as Clarke seeks to change law



**- a report from
Victoria Phillips,
Head of the
Employment
Rights Unit at
Thompsons Solicitors**

A SLEF members who are injured as a result of acts of trespass on railway lines, including suicides, will no longer be able to claim compensation through the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme (CICS), if reforms being pushed by justice secretary Ken Clarke become law.

The Ministry of Justice consultation 'Getting it right for victims and witnesses', which Clarke claims is intended to give victims of crime more support, proposes that offences connected with trespass on the railway, including suicide or attempted suicide, be removed from the scheme.

It also removes injuries that are in bands one to five of the scheme. These carry the tariff of £1,000 and include temporary anxiety. This is the injury that most train drivers who witness suicides suffer and claim compensation for.

Removing these bands would therefore make most members in this position ineligible to apply to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA) for an award, even if offences connected with trespass on the railway were not excluded.

The government's justification for removing railway offences from the scheme is that suicide is not a criminal act.

LOSS OF WELL-ESTABLISHED PRECEDENT

In the 1980's ASLEF and Thompsons went to court to establish that those killing themselves in front of a train were committing a crime of violence. Even though the House of Lords were not convinced that suicide was within the CICS, the government was persuaded that railway workers should be able to claim compensation for the trauma of seeing someone commit suicide by jumping in front of a train or from having to deal with the aftermath of the suicide.

It was accepted in 1990 that the best way to compensate those who suffered was to allow payments to be made under the CICS. Although the Labour government also proposed, in 2004, to remove railway suicides from the scheme, it agreed not to after a strong campaign by railway unions.

Further restrictions to eligibility include that there will be no award if the incident was not reported to the police as soon as reasonably practicable, if the victim has an unspent conviction (no matter how minor) and if they have lived in the UK for less than six months.

DETERRING APPLICANTS

The current scheme allows incidents to be reported to a body other than the police, such as the employer. This is often more appropriate when someone has been assaulted in their workplace, and many drivers report suicides in this way. Changing this rule is likely to deter some victims from claiming.

Mick Whelan, ASLEF general secretary, said that to suggest that the trauma suffered by drivers when they witness a suicide does not

amount to a criminal injury is 'an insult'.

'It is a driver's job to concentrate on the line ahead - but this means they will often see a potential suicide a good way off and have plenty of time to take in the horror of the situation. They know the futility of applying the emergency brakes - and will remember the sickening thud of impact for the rest of their lives - in flashbacks, nightmares and whenever they pass the spot again. It can mean the end of a driving career.'

'Drivers are required to stop the train to check the line in case the individual needs urgent medical attention. Already in shock, they are likely to be traumatised by what they see. It is an insult to suggest that they have not been the victim of crime.'

'As a money saving measure, removing our members from eligibility has little to offer because the majority of their claims are for £1,000. But with this government we know the motivation is further undermining workers' rights. It certainly has nothing to do with giving more support to our members who have been the victim of crime.'

ASLEF and Thompsons will be responding to the consultation, which ends later this month.



○ DRIVER INJURED BY LASER IN GLOUCESTER

A train driver was injured when youths shone a green laser into his eyes as he drove from Bristol to Worcester recently. Police said two youths were seen on a bridge in the area, but nobody was found when officers searched the area. Happily he has recovered, but he was not only distracted but could have suffered serious damage to his eyes.

○ PILOTS LOBBY AGAINST 'UNSAFE' EU HOURS CHANGE

Airline pilots from across Britain lobbied Ministers and MPs in Parliament last month urging the government to stand firm against the EU proposals to increase UK pilot flying hours over and above levels deemed safe by scientists and medical experts. Studies show that 15% to 20% of all fatal air accidents have pilot fatigue as a contributing factor and that the relative accident risk increases by three times when a pilot has been on duty for more than 12 hours. Current UK rules limit the maximum hours a pilot can operate to 10 hours 15 minutes but the EU plans to increase that to 13 hours 55 minutes.

Put the celebrations for Burma on hold ...



Although sections of the international community are calling for a relaxation of sanctions against Burma, a recent meeting sponsored by the TUC has urged caution. Why is this? National Organiser Simon Weller reports ...

Following a general election in 2010 the Burmese military junta was dissolved and for the first time since 1962, a civilian government was installed. This government has embarked on a series of reforms, including the release of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest; establishment of a National Human Rights Commission; relaxation of press censorship; changes to labour laws; and release of more than 600 political prisoners.

One of these political prisoners, released in October 2011, was U Tin Hla, a Burmese Railway Union leader. U Tin Hla had been active in his efforts to organise rail workers to support the popular uprising of the Buddhist monks and people in late September 2007. According to ITUC reports, he was arrested along with his entire family on 20 November 2007. While his family was later released, U Tin



Although Aung San Suu Kyi has been released, many more political prisoners are still detained

Hla was charged and sentenced to seven years in prison for possession of explosives which were, in fact, electric wires and tools from his toolbox. He developed tuberculosis and diabetes whilst in prison, which will affect him for the rest of his life.

As a result of the new government's reforms, there is a growing call within the international community for the EU, US and Australia to lift the trade, investment and financial sanctions currently imposed on the country, and even the arms embargo. However, there are also calls for caution: The government's motives for these reforms are questionable and there are concerns about its genuine, long-term commitment to the implementation of reforms.

Economic sanctions were imposed on Burma following reports of human rights violations including child labour, human trafficking and a lack of freedom of speech. Although U Tin Hla and others have now been released from prison, their release has come with severe conditions. They have not been granted any compensation or support and the threat of having to finish their sentence hangs over them if they return to their political activities. It is thought that hundreds more political prisoners, including trade union activists, are still being detained. There is also

evidence that Forced Labour remains widespread, forced conscription of child soldiers remains rampant and corruption remains rife.

The Labour Organisations Law of October 11 2011 legalised unions for the first time in decades, but this legislation is yet to be implemented. To date, trade unions have not been able to register, and the Federation of Trade Unions Burma (FTUB) remains outlawed as an alleged 'terrorist organisation'.

Burma, officially the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, is one of the most resource rich countries in Southeast Asia. International businesses are already showing interest in investment and they can be seen making contacts in anticipation of the gold rush that is likely to take place if the country is opened up to foreign investment without responsible regulation.

While there have been significant positive changes in Burma, it is important not to take a rose-tinted view of recent developments. Today the military still retain the greatest power within the country. Until issues around freedom of speech, freedom of association, lack of transparency, forced labour and other human rights violations are seriously addressed, it is not advisable to lift or to relax current sanctions on the country.

Buenos Aires sees worst Argentinian crash for 40 years

At least 49 people were killed and over 600 injured when a train crashed into the barriers at Once station in Buenos Aires last month.

Last year 23 people died and over 300 were injured in train accidents in Argentina and a former Argentinian rail chief, Juan Alberto Roccatagliata, said that investment and maintenance levels 'have not been up to what is required to reduce the probability of things like this happening.'

The Buenos Aires rail system was privatised in the 1990s in the hope of boosting investment in infrastructure. However, Pablo Martorelli, president of the Argentine Rail Institute says, 'This did not happen as the contracts given to private companies did not oblige them to invest in the network. Companies are not interested in investing as they already get their income from state subsidies.'

It was Argentina's worst train

crash since February 1970, when a train smashed into another at full speed in suburban Buenos Aires, killing 200 people.

Mick Whelan wrote to the Argentinian union to express our deep sorrow at the incident and to offer any practical support we could offer.

● The union has written to Robert Bouvier, the president of the Canadian Teamsters, to commiserate with his members involved in a passenger train

derailment on 27 February near Burlington, Ontario. Three Teamsters members, employees of Via Train were killed and dozens of passengers were injured.

A collision also took place in Poland near the town of Szczekociny, just north of Krakow, when one of the trains ended up on the wrong track. Sixteen people were killed and 57 passengers were injured. We sent our sympathies to our fellow railworkers and their families.

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Workfare? It's not fair, and never was ...



Last month saw companies including Burger King, Waterstones, Sainsbury and TK Maxx jostling with each other to withdraw from Workfare, the

government 'welfare to work' programme aimed at young people between 16 and 24. They abandoned ship after it emerged that if a participant leaves without 'good reason' after the first week, they can lose two weeks' worth of jobseeker's allowance (JSA).

Here **KARL DAVIS** of our Peterborough branch argues that it was only ever a cheap trick leading the unemployed nowhere ...

I have directly asked a number of Tory MP's about the Workfare scheme – and while they have been prepared to debate, they have all been either evasive, or worryingly vague about the detail in their answers. Regardless of the defence by individual MPs, the coalition government's response to massive criticism of Workfare has been soaked in fear, mistruth, and predictable disdain for organised workers.

For anyone who thinks Workfare is a good thing, let's examine what we can only assume to be happening (given the government's unwillingness to debate the issue properly). Benefit claimants are being sent to work for a defined period of time to gain work experience. As ministers side-step legitimate questions, we can only surmise that this is to fill a vacancy within an organisation. It is important to know if there is a job available.



Some companies have withdrawn from the controversial Workfare programme

At the end of the programme, the company is not obliged to offer work, regardless of suitability or performance. It is perfectly at liberty to ask for another participant under the scheme – and repeat the cycle.

Without levelling unqualified charges at companies, it is easy to substitute a 'Workfare merry-go-round' for a proper HR department that actually gives people real jobs and pays them real wages.

SHADOWING GHOST JOBS

If companies allow benefit claimants to develop experience by shadowing staff, as opposed to filling empty jobs with Workfare participants, that could prove enormously positive so long as it is monitored and managed in the right way. But if they are using benefit claimants to staff their stores and factories, they are frustrating and stifling an already-choked jobs market.

Undoubtedly some participants will find jobs at the end, but that is not sufficient to counter legitimate concerns. Without Workfare, these jobs would have been advertised properly, and people would have applied, been interviewed and selected for vacancies. They would have moved off benefits and contributed to the economy.

I fail to see how Workfare improves this process.

The scheme, touted as a 'route to hope from despair' amid other hyperbolic terms, is supposedly aimed at those with no work experience. But even if it does introduce inexperienced job seekers into work, it does so at the expense of other JSA claimants who are looking for a job. Workfare takes the stick with which job seekers and benefit claimants have been whacked, and replaces it with a double-edged sword.

IF THERE ARE JOBS, ADVERTISE THEM

If there are jobs advertise them to benefit

claimants and let successful candidates earn a fair wage for their labour. Why allow rich multinational companies to boost their profits on the backs of unpaid labour provided by a clueless government?

All Workfare does is provide a cycle of unpaid labour for the country's most profitable organisations whilst preventing the scheme's participants from permanently accessing the same vacancy they're forced to occupy on a temporary basis and receiving the commensurate wage. At best it shoe-horns an inexperienced person into a role that could be taken by another benefit claimant who does have experience.

It generates good headlines for the Tories within their press and media buddies, panders to the doctrine of divide and rule perpetrated by big business and government, and needlessly diverts jobs away from one part of the job market to another.

WE NEED GROWTH TO PROVIDE JOBS

Workfare is not a fresh initiative that increases the access to jobs for the unemployed. It is the equivalent of standing still in a time of almost-biblical drought, trying to turn public opinion against competing components of the water cycle – instead of cutting the rhetoric, listening to the voice of reason, and cracking on with digging a well.

People on benefits are struggling in a suffocated jobs market. They don't need the finger of foolish millionaires wagged needlessly at them.

What people on benefits need is responsible government that helps them to find work by guiding the economy to growth, rather than chopping at its bones. They need job centres that channel them toward REAL jobs, rather than using them as unpaid labour: and they need welfare reform targeted at improving the quality of life of the poorest and most vulnerable.

THREE DECADES ON, WE LOOK THE 1982 FLEXIBLE ROSTERING



It is 30 years since the ASLEF flexible rostering dispute of 1982 took place. Thirty years is a long time ago - but the passage of time in no way lessens the significance of the event. It was not only a key event in ASLEF's history but one whose ripples can still be felt today in terms of the extension of management's right to manage, cuts in public services, the balance between work and life, and relations with sister unions ... We asked **Gregor Gall, Professor of Industrial Relations at the University of Hertfordshire, to revisit the dispute and assess its importance ...**

I NAUSPICIOUSLY, the strike began on Saturday the fourth of July. It had been preceded by more than a year of strife, strikes and negotiations over job cuts, pay rises and productivity gains involving ASLEF and its sister unions, the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) and the Transport Salaried Staff Association (TSSA). The 'big picture' to the dispute's specific details was the Thatcher government's policy of not investing in the public sector and also cutting back on existing expenditure. This put huge pressure on remaining staff who, quite rightly, wanted to be compensated for fewer workers doing more work.

Immediately before the dispute began, on 30 June, ASLEF offered to stand down the strike if the British Railways Board (BRB) withdrew its imposition of flexible rosters. Moreover, ASLEF stated it was prepared to participate in pilot experiments on productivity improvements and flexible rostering which would allow the introduction of the 39-hour week – which BRB had already agreed to the previous year – to be largely self-financing.

But the BRB was having none of it. They smelt blood, having had their noses attuned to it by the Thatcher government. But then Thatcher upped the ante massively by declaring that on 24 July 1982 the railway system would be shut down, with all workers dismissed. ASLEF called off its strike on 18 July. It was a miserable, horrible defeat.

LEARNING THE LESSONS

ASLEF had been at odds with the NUR over the eight hour day – which would be ended by the flexible rosters. As if that was not bad enough, both ASLEF and the NUR chose not to coordinate their individual strikes against flexible rostering, crossed each others' picketlines and the TUC urged ASLEF members to return to work.



ASLEF called off its strike on 18 July 1982. It was a miserable, horrible defeat

The sense in which workers either 'stand united' or 'fall divided' when facing the employer was then manifestly palpable. But this is not the only – or even main – lesson to be learnt from the dispute. Indeed, there seem to be four.

DICTATED WORKING TIME

○ The first is that the rostering dispute was about what countless workers have faced since, namely, employers trying to unilaterally dictate what their working time is. For decades, one of workers' main struggles has been to reduce the working week or day. This has been for the most fundamental of reasons: to make sure workers work to live and not live to work. In other words, not to let work dominate life, but rather to allow workers to have the leisure time to enjoy the fruits of their labour – their wages. It's for this

type of reason that unions often boast correctly to non-union workers, 'We gave you the weekend!'

But since the turning point of 1979, employers have engaged in a war of attrition not only to overturn these hard-won gains but to dictate when and where workers turn up to work. Whenever the term 'flexibility' is used, it's always the employer's version of it, defined to meet their needs and to help them make profits from workers' labour.

In this process, workers have lost control over the most sacred of things – their time. In a deregulated labour market, this has been taken to the ultimate degree with 'zero hours' contracts, where workers are guaranteed no set amount of hours but still have to be on call for what work might be available. If they turn up

BACK AT DISPUTE



and there is no need for them, then 'so be it' is the logic. This turns the clock back to the 1930s, when labourers would go down to the docks hoping to secure a day's work.

THATCHER'S BATTLE GROUNDS

○ The second is that the battle with ASLEF was merely one of a long line of many set piece battles to destroy British society as it had become. The others were the 1981 steel strike, the 1983 Eddie Shah dispute, the 1984-1985 miners' strike, the 1986-1987 Wapping strike, the 1987-1988 TVam lockout, the 1989 dock strike and so on and so on. All but the 1988 postal workers' strike were defeats. In them, the Thatcher government was either the employer or the government egged on and supported its employer friends.

Since the Second World War, the labour and trade union movement had successfully tamed the worst excesses of the free market so that the market became socialised. This was not socialism but a form of social democracy where market processes and outcomes were regulated. Public ownership and price regulation of basic

“ **ASLEF OFFERED TO STAND DOWN IF THE BRB WITHDREW ITS IMPOSITION OF FLEXIBLE ROSTERS** ”

necessities (like rent, electricity, food) were just some of the most obvious forms this took. But others were strong unions and regulation of wages and employment.

Under the onslaught since 1979, Thatcher realised the power of workers' collective means of protecting themselves, i.e., unions, had to be crushed in order for the employers to have back again what they wanted – the free market. The free market meant not having to share your profits with workers and not having to negotiate with them. In political jargon, this is not just capitalism but the neo-liberal variant of it. Not very liberal in any way!

The battles that were fought and lost in the 1980s meant that today workers no longer have some basic protections from the market that they should. As though that is not bad enough, a 'race to the bottom' has been set in train. Each

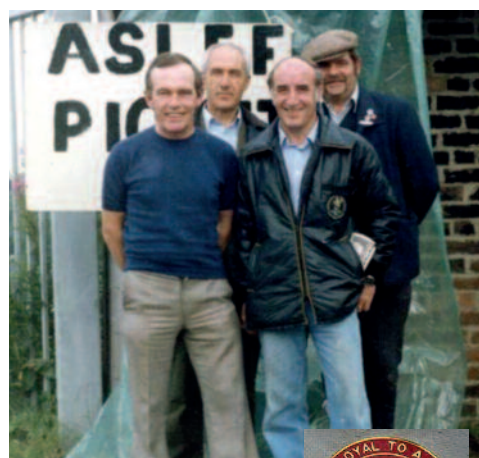
victory for a particular employer not only made life worse for the group of workers concerned but also created pressure on other employers to do similarly. So when one cuts jobs or wage costs, other employers fearing competitive disadvantage do so too. This then means the employer that cut jobs or wages no longer has the competitive advantage they did and so is compelled to cut again. And so on and so on. Come the crash of 2008 onwards, every employer is looking for that with a vengeance and many times over.

LIMITING PROTECTION

○ Third, there is no getting away from the reality of life under capitalism that not only do workers need collective protection in the form of unions but they also need strong and effective unions. For any union to become strong and effective requires that it works out the how, when and where of creating strategic leverage over the employer to gain its bargaining objectives. The rightwing media may call it 'militancy' and 'ransom' but it is merely being rational in pursuit of agreed goals. (If a business did this, it would be commended and given a Queen's Award for Industry.) Obviously, it requires high union density and member loyalty to the union and vice-versa. But it may also include seeking and gaining the help of others such as sister unions at home and abroad.

ATTACK ON PUBLIC SERVICE

○ Fourth, and finally, workers are the best guardians of the services they provide to the public (even if they do not know it). The stated rationale for the privatisation and market-isation of public services has been that costs would come down and service quality would go up. What prevented this beforehand, we were told, was the vested interest of the producers, i.e., workers. We now know this to be bunkum. But we must also use this knowledge to show that the reverse can also be true – that workers, when working with the public, are best placed to ensure the conditions that lead to properly funded and quality services (and when in the public sector). Decent staffing levels with motivated staff respected by their employer lead to quality services. These conditions cannot be



Pickets at Springs Branch in Wigan. Inset: There were hundreds of loyalty badges struck after the strike

achieved in the private sector where business, motivated only by profit, knows the value of nothing and the price of everything. But they need strong, not weak, unions to come about.

STILL HERE, STILL DEFENDING MEMBERS ...

When the story is brought up to date thirty years later, despite the defeat of the 1982 ASLEF strike,

“ **DESPITE THE DEFEAT OF THE 1982 ASLEF STRIKE, ASLEF ITSELF WAS NOT BEATEN** ”

ASLEF itself was not beaten. Yes, 1982 was a crushing blow and paved the way, ultimately, for privatisation. But ASLEF still exists and still commands high levels of union density and influence. Indeed, it was only a matter of a few years later that ASLEF delivered to the striking miners probably the greatest amount of solidarity from any group of workers in their year-long battle.

The line that Leeds an Oz to Ashford!

Tony Emmett is the 'Aussie at Ashford'. He drove trains in South Australia for twenty years before moving to the UK and **Chris Proctor** went to meet him to talk about doing the same job on opposite sides of the globe ...

G 'day, Sport!' Tony Emmett greets everyone like an old friend, exuding the relaxed sociability that you associate with Australians. The sense of what-you-see-is-what-you-get and the inclination to think you are OK unless you decide to prove different. It's an essentially positive outlook that suits the sunny Kent morning.

Tony started on the railway in Port Augusta when he was just 15. 'I was a call boy', he says. There's a short silence before he chuckles and tells me the post bore no relation to a call girl!

'Officially I was a Junior Locomotive Engineman. We were called 'call boys' because part of our duty was to call up drivers' homes to make sure they got to work on time.

'On the day shift we'd wash the locomotives in the diesel sheds where they were being maintained or set off on fat-wheeled

motorbikes to deliver roster alterations to drivers, sometimes as many as a hundred. After that, I became a 'Junior Locomotive Engineman', then a 'Locomotive Engineman 1st Year'.

'We were all assigned to a senior driver. You learned rules in a classroom and everything else, like the track and the routes, were passed down to you from the senior driver. You needed to know things like the triple-valve Westinghouse braking system. All kinds of stuff that sounds complicated, but you get used to it.'

For the first 14 years Tony was employed by the state-owned Australian National Railways. When that was broken up he worked for the National Rail Corporation for a further six.

His next move was to Connex in Ashford, Kent.

ANOTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD

'You Brits would find it really difficult to grasp the distances involved in Australia – trains running from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific. The Ghan passenger train that runs from Adelaide and Alice Springs to Darwin is about 3,000 kilometres – almost 1,900 miles. The trip takes 48 hours from Port Augusta to Alice Springs!'

'We'd leave at



South Australia to South East Kent: Tony Emmett's seen it all

seven at night and arrive at Alice Spring about 10am the next day. There would be two pairs of drivers, crewed up on 'relay working'. While one pair was in the cab, the other two would be resting. We worked seven hours 30 on, seven hours 30 off.

'And the freight trains we drove were like things from another planet. The diesel locomotives were 4,400 horses and we would have at least 3. We'd pull 161 coal hoppers with 14,000 tons of coal. They were 1.6 km long! There was a huge shunt loop at Leigh Creek's open mine and when the engine was almost back onto the main line, they were still filling the hoppers at the back of the train with coal! We would take that to the power station in Port Augusta.'

MAPPING OUT CHANGE

Tony's been pointing out these locations to me on a map on a table of Ashford's mess-room.

'So where were you born?' I ask.

'Leeds', he says.

'Is there a Leeds in Australia?'

'No. Leeds is in England.'

It is like Ed Miliband suddenly declaring he's a Rastafarian. This man before me is an archetypal Aussie: he's large, confident in himself, open and ... well he sounds Australian.

'Yes. I was a 'ten pound Pom!'' he tells me.

His parents emigrated when he was 15 months old and sadly they split up and his Dad returned home. Life has been tough for Tony at times; his Mother died when he was 12 and he was raised by a family called the Morgans.

'When my Mother died, the British consulate asked me if I wanted to go back to the UK. I was young and frightened, and I had no memories of England. Then, as now, I thought of myself as an Aussie. I stayed and



In the Ashford mess-room, Tony reminisces about Oz ...

the Morgans looked after me.

'I ended up on the railway because Mr Morgan used to be a guard, and he 'had a word with someone.' That's how it worked.'

FOUR DAY TURNS!

So thanks to Mr Morgan, Tony spent two decades as a railwayman in South Australia. 'I always loved the job, but it can make marriages fragile,' he says. 'I was away for three or four days when we went to Cook. It's an astonishing place where South and West Australian drivers change over. It's a ghost town about 800 kilometres from Port Augusta with a population of four! To get there we ran along the longest straight stretch of track in the world – 478 kilometres. We drove about 120 kilometres of it, all single track with salt flats each side.'

But the continual absence took its toll and his marriage broke up. Tony felt a need to escape, and not being a man to do things by halves, he selected the other end of the globe. 'I ended up in Folkestone in 2000, aged 33, with some money in my pocket but without a job. I applied to Connex but it took me a year to get in. I spent that in a soft drinks factory, working 12-hour shifts on my feet all the time. I'll tell you what mate – it made me appreciate a job on the railway! It felt like a prison sentence, it was bloody awful. The letter from Connex accepting me was the most welcome I've ever had in my life.'

BIRTHDAY TREAT FROM CONNEX

'I became a UK rail worker on my birthday, 15 January, in 2001. What a difference! The trains looked like toys – and the weather! I can't stand your snow. I remember one time at Cook I leaned out of the air-conditioned cab and the Station Manager said the thermometer under the pepper tree showed 52 degrees centigrade. That was excessive, but I do believe the sunshine Down Under makes us all



The Ghan line runs 3,000 kilometers from north to south Australia. Tony has worked the southerly route from Alice Springs to the coast

happier and friendlier.'

Tony soon qualified as a UK driver and played a small part in UK train history when he drove the last 'slam door' train into London Cannon Street. And he says rail workers are similar across the globe, with their banter, sense of brotherhood and social gatherings. 'You're not as friendly as people in Oz though. We say hello to anyone in a happy-go-lucky sort of way. I miss that. When I first came here and I shouted out 'G'day, mate' to strangers, people thought I was a nutter!'

Tony also misses the openness of the country and the isolation you can find on 'a walkabout' into the wild bush areas. 'You can't be too careful when you do that. I nearly perished once when I misjudged how far I'd walked out by Leigh Creek. The temperature got up into the 40s and I became seriously dehydrated. You can die out there.' And he says the life is much more relaxed, at least in his part of Australia. 'We work hard and then we play,' he says. 'You Poms need to smile more – and learn to take life as it comes!'



Not quite the typical Australian: a 'ten pound Pom' born in Leeds!



Trains like this were the norm for driver Tony in South Australia



This was normal traction for Tony back in Oz. Different outlooks all round!

A HUNDRED YEARS OF UNION

The April 1912 ASLEF Locomotive Journal carried a number of accounts of industrial incidents which we reproduce here as it is Workers Memorial Day on 28 April. The WMD motto is, 'Remember the dead – and fight for the living! – so here's a bit of remembering the dead ...

SEVERN TUNNEL JUNCTION

'Sir, - It is with deepest regret that I have to report a sad and fatal accident to our Brother E. J. Dyhouse, engineman. While working his train from Llanelly to Severn Tunnel Junction, on Sunday, February 25th, he got off

his engine in Cumburla loop, near Landore and was knocked down by a light engine. Our late brother was a member we could ill afford to lose, and his judgement and advice will be greatly missed. A beautiful wreath was sent by his fellow workers, as last token of respect towards their late

comrade. Branch Secretary.'

WOMBWELL WIDOW

'Sir, - I wish to tender my sincere thanks to the Society for the Benevolent Fund Grant of £38 and Death Allowance of £20; also to the officers of Sheffield (No.1) Branch for kindness shown to me on the loss of my husband, James Wallis, who was killed in the Wombwell accident. I also tender my thanks for the efforts on my behalf for compensation. I wish the Society every success in the continuation of its good work. Yours sincerely. Ann Wallis.'

OPENSHAW

'Sir, - It is with sincere regret that I

record that one of our most valued members, Brother John Cordon, met his death under painful circumstances in the accident at Torside, Great Central Railway, on Monday, February 5th. Our late esteemed brother was one of the best workers in the branch, ever ready to lend a helping hand in the work of uplifting our class, even at great personal risk, he was found in the forefront of battle. He was a trade unionist in the absolute sense of the word, and ever zealous of those noble basic principles upon which our association is founded.'

○ Extracts selected and edited by Dave Bennett

PETER BRADY PROUD DRIVER AND MARINE

It is with great sadness that I write of the sudden death of brother Peter Brady of the Leeds branch. Peter passed away on the 24 February aged 74.

Peter started his railway career in 1953 at Hammerton Street in Bradford as a cleaner. He left to join the Royal Marines where he served

in the Special Boat Service, something of which he remained very proud. After leaving the Marines he moved to Low Moor depot and following its closure, he moved to Manningham in Bradford.

In 1964 Peter moved to Holbeck depot in Leeds. When that closed in the mid-1980s he made a final move, this time to Leeds to work for GNER, where he became a local level rep.

Peter joined the union's Retired Members'

Section after retiring and attended social functions at Leeds where it was always a pleasure to see him. It came as a great shock to us all to hear that Peter suffered a fatal heart attack whilst on holiday with his wife Gillian.

Our thoughts go out to Gillian, his son Neil and his two granddaughters at this sad time.

Pauline Cawood, Secretary, Leeds branch

PAT MCGOWAN JOURNALISM TO DRIVING DREAM JOB

Patrick joined the railway in March 2005 after working as a hugely successful journalist for 27 years on the Bradford Telegraph and then London's Evening Standard.

He was the first to 'break' major developments in the Georgi Markov, Piper Alpha and Harold Shipman cases and reported from the Old Bailey on trials including Ian Huntley, Jeremy Thorpe and Jonathan Aitken. He also coined the phrase 'the wrong type of snow'!

When he came to the Basingstoke training centre and it must have come as a shock to find he had to learn a new language – 'the railway'! – with terms like 'the cess', 'the 4-foot', 'spt', and 'working by pilotman', not to mention 'home signals', 'theatre boxes' and 'banner repeaters'.

Patrick drove his first train as a fully qualified driver on 2 May 2006.

Although his new driving role sometimes involved 04:00 starts and finishing shifts at two in the morning, he was always immaculately turned out: unlike some of us, I never saw him un-



Pat was the subject of the first of the Journal's 'Key Worker' features in January 2006

shaved!

He was very proud of his job, none more so than when he was driving a 12-car train up from Alton in the morning peak with up to a 1,000 passengers and £9 million pounds worth of equipment behind him.

Patrick was also proud to be in ASLEF, 'a proper union' he said. Whenever he was in the mess

room at Wimbledon or Waterloo, you would be guaranteed an informed conversation on any subject: exactly what you'd expect from a good journalist.

When he was undergoing his first treatment we were able to arrange a trip in the front of a train for his family. I vividly remember him in full uniform looking proud as Punch as he held his grandson

Joe for a photo in the cab. Because of his illness, Patrick was not allowed to drive and I was proud to be his family 'chauffeur' while he showed his family the job he loved so much.

He will be missed at Wimbledon depot, but he won't be forgotten. He was a true gentleman. Our sincere condolences go to Patrick's wife Margaret, his daughters Eve and Stella and to grandson, Joe, in whom Patrick showed such pride.

Tony Butcher, Wimbledon

HARRY MERCER NOTE PAPER MAN!

Harry Mercer started his railway career in 1955 after doing his National Service in the Royal Air Force. He got his driving job at Orpington, where he stayed for the rest of his career.

Harry was a very likeable chap with a cheeky smile. I remember that when I was at Orpington, he used to write his working down each day on a cigarette paper! Now that really does take some doing!

Rest in peace, Harry. Our thoughts are with your family at this time.

Dave Weddle, Reporter, Tonbridge Retired Members Section

BILL THOMKINSON MADE US HAPPY

Bill Thomkinson was one of Tonbridge's characters. He was 90 when he died. Born in Stockport, he finished his schooling on the Isle of Man and worked as a farm-hand until the outbreak of war.

Bill joined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and saw action in North Africa Italy including one of the most desperate encounters of WW2 at Monte Cassino.

He became a Driver at Tonbridge having been a fireman at Hithergreen. He stayed in Tonbridge for the rest of his 40-year career, driving the last steam train out of the town. Bill served many years on the LDC and was always a very funny man to work with. He loved travel, cricket and football.

Our thoughts go out to his family at this very sad time. God bless you, Bill. You made many men happy.

Dave Weddle, Reporter, Tonbridge RMS

GEORGE HOWIS A BUSY MAN

George Howis has died at 81 years. He started his railway career at Tunbridge Wells West and it shows his dedication that he cycled over 20 miles from Oxted to the depot at least one way every day. He carried out his National Service in the Medical Corps as he had flat feet, serving in north Africa with the Medics.

He returned to the railway after NS and came to Tonbridge in the early '60s for his Driving job as a Driver. He spend the rest of his career here.

As he was a member of the St John's Ambulance, he got the nick name 'Florence Nightingale'! He also taught 'Safety on the Railway' around local schools and was 'acting foreman' as we used to call them. Always a very busy man, George retired because of health problems after 44 years' service. Our thought are with his family and friends.

Dave Weddle, Reporter, Tonbridge RMS

National Officer Andy Morrison – an advocate, an activist, a man of honour

The sudden passing of Andy Morrison on 12 February at the age of 61 years is a terrible loss not only to ASLEF, but to everyone lucky enough to have known him. He was a dearly loved and respected man, a unique character. He had great zest for life, and managed to combine fiercely-held views about socialism with a relaxed and sympathetic manner. He was a self-deprecating man with a quiet pointed humour who was utterly dependable and endlessly patient. He was a proud family man, a committed trade unionist and a loyal friend. Andy was constantly amused by the follies of the world while being utterly dedicated to overturning them. He was, quite simply, a lovely man.

He was not only one of the most popular, he was also one of the most effective, of the union's national officers.

Although you wouldn't have guessed it from his accent, Andy was a Scot, whose parents moved to Harwich when he was young: but Andy never forgot his Scottish roots any more than he lost his love of the sea: he had a lifetime's fascination with boats and shipping and very nearly opted

for a career at sea before choosing the railways. Andy joined ASLEF in 1966 when he joined the grade at Stratford; he then moved to Parkeston and finally transferred to Colchester. Andy served the union at local level on the LDC and as a member of his branch committee; he took on the role of Company Councillor; he became Chair of our District Council and was Chair of the national Appeals Committee for many years; eventually he became our full-time District Organiser in 2006.

Ever active, Andy was, remarkably, Mayor of Harwich town council on three occasions. Although no advocate of the monarchy, the first two of these coincided with the deaths of Diana and the Queen Mother – to whom he led the town's tributes with dignity – and the 2004 visit to the town by the Queen – who he welcomed with respect and pleasure.

It is a mark of the high regard in which he was held that there was scarcely a free seat in St Nicholas' church where the celebration of his life was held. Among the huge number of his ASLEF colleagues who made the sad journey to show their respect were three General Secretaries –

Lew Adams, Keith Norman and Mick Whelan. As Mick said when he first heard the news of Andy's death, 'Andy's sudden passing leaves a great gap in our lives. We will all miss his counsel, his humour and his dignity.' The warmth people felt for Andy was evident at the end of the funeral service where, as his coffin was carried from the church for a private family cremation, the congregation spontaneously broke into applause: it was a warm tribute to a special man.

It was an honour to be able to speak at the celebration of Andy's life at St Nicholas' Church in Harwich on 22 February. As the district's Executive Committee Member, I worked closely with Andy in District No.5. He was much more than a colleague to me. He was a dear friend. This is some of what I said in the church:

'I first met Andy at Colchester in 1989. A few years later we found ourselves working together in various ASLEF positions. It was during that time that I learnt how much of a gentleman and friend Andy was.

'If ever there was a difficult situation, Andy would know what to say. If you were having a difficult time he would be

A Service of Thanksgiving
& Celebration for the Life of

ANDY MORRISON

3rd August 1950 – 12th February 2012



St Nicholas' Church, Harwich
on
Wednesday 22nd February 2012
at 3.00 p.m.

Service conducted by Reverend Peter Mann

supportive. If you made a mistake, he wouldn't get angry; he would try and sort it out.

'He would use his calm and persuasive ways during a debate but never took it personally if a decision went against him.

'Andy was someone who I looked up to with a huge amount of respect – and I soon learnt that everyone who knew him felt the same.

'He was a proud man. Proud of his seafaring roots. Proud of his railway experience. Proud of his trade union. And most of all, proud of Pam and his family. I want to thank them for sharing Andy with us at ASLEF.

'As our friend he will be sorely missed, but he will always be remembered with great happiness.'

We offer our heart-felt sympathy to his wife and best friend, Pam; to Gary, Alan and Beth; and to grandchildren Emma, Kyle, Jack, Grace, Gabriella and Teddy. We know how much they will miss their amazing 'Silver Fox': because we share their pain in his passing. In time, when our grieving is done we will count ourselves fortunate to have known such a remarkable man.

Nigel Gibson, Executive Committee Member, District 5, ASLEF



Andy Morrison on his election as Mayor of Harwich in 2003. He played an important role in his community as well as his union

Plaque to commemorate Stratford Depot

On Saturday 4 February, Stratford branch's annual reunion saw many past and present members gathered to reminisce and catch up with former colleagues and friends. The turnout was good, despite the efforts of the snowy weather to hamper things, and the branch would like to extend their thanks to Tom and Jan of 'The Railway Tavern' for providing their usual warm hospitality.

Thanks also to Bryan Corbett from the EC who attended and made presentations to members

for their long and loyal service – 40 year badges for M. Ashworth and J. Porter, and a 50-year medallion for R. Hackett. Congratulations to all of them!

Chris Daughters conducted the raffle. Along with Lew Adams and Network Rail he has been instrumental in managing to secure a commemorative plaque to mark the long and significant history of Stratford Depot. The plaque will describe the history of Stratford, headed by the famous 'Cockney Sparrow' depot emblem,

and will be located in the shopping centre which is where the former depot stood.

Hopefully this will be unveiled at a ceremony in the near future and will be a showpiece to acknowledge Stratford's important role in the history of our railways. It has been a great achievement in this age of red tape and bureaucracy, so huge thanks to Chris, Lew and all those involved in making this a success. It is a fitting tribute to Stratford Depot which is now the site of the

forthcoming Olympics.

The event was enjoyed by all those all who braved the weather – but with this in mind, it is planned to hold the 2013 reunion in May or June next year when the weather will hopefully be a bit better. No doubt Barry Moore will put an article in the Journal in time for next year's event, so watch this space! In the meantime, thanks to Stratford Branch for organising this year's event.

John Thorpe, Reporter, Stratford branch

The ties of Newton Heath

The Newton Heath branch at its January meeting had the pleasure of awarding loyalty ties to drivers Dave Ibbertson and G. Albertelli to mark 20 years as ASLEF members. This change of direction also includes new branch badges being struck, and we have plans to produce a regional banner.

The idea behind the badges and ties is to promote ASLEF and encourage a sense of identity within the rank and file membership as well as recognising the loyalty and service to ASLEF and the driving grade members of members like Dave and Joe. Dave has also reached retirement and we at the Newton Heath branch obviously wish him all the very best for the future.

We also have to seek a new venue for our branch meetings as the current location is no longer available – which might be a blessing in disguise as it is not considered the most hospitable of places to conduct our business. We're hopeful that this, and recent efforts at our branch will encourage more members to attend branch meetings so they can play a more active role in their union.

- Our Assistant Branch Secretary, Gary Prince, was awarded a Commendation by the British Transport Police last month for the assistance he gave to them during an incident involving a drunk and disorderly male at Victoria station last November. Well done, Gary – it's good to see you get this recognition.

Steve Hill, Newton Heath branch



Members from Norwich got together to celebrate branch members' achievements



The Norwich branch was proud to mark the achievements of four of its members recently.

Retired member Bro M Woods was awarded with a 50-year medallion at the branch's February meeting. This achievement was marked by a presentation from DCC rep Bro S Wright. And three retiring members - Bro J Nicholas, Bro R Finch, and Bro B Earls – have each been presented with retirement certificates. Presenting them was Robin Fisher who has recently stood down from the branch chairman position after a decade of service as vice-chairman and branch chairman. **Paul Green, Secretary, Norwich branch**

Brompton wants to grow!

The West Brompton branch has over 300 members, drivers working for the District and Piccadilly Lines and Test Trains on The London Underground. But it's not enough, according to Branch Secretary Greg Tasker and Chairman Peter Riches.

'Our existing members can help by

- Coming along to branch meetings
- Talking about ASLEF in the mess rooms and canteen

- Reading and talking about ASLEF Notice Boards with others
- Wearing ASLEF badges and ties (you can get from Greg)
- Showing the Company a strong membership
- Ask your Branch Secretary for a branch badge if you do not have one
- Carry application forms to pass onto interested parties
- Making sure the Secretary has your current details like email, mobile and address

- Stressing that we represent the vast amount of Test Train operators (our reps are Tim Miles and Ian Blake)
- Making sure you have the contact details for our branch officers and reps
- Remembering the Branch Secretary can be contacted 24/7 in an emergency 07958-255829.

'We need your help to keep our branch the biggest in the country. A 100% membership benefits us all when we deal with awkward decisions, unfair disciplines, unjust sackings and improving pay and



conditions.'

Ordinary Branch Meetings are held on the last Wednesday of each month at 17:30 at O'Neil's in Earls Court.

Greg Tasker, Branch Secretary



Mick Whelan makes a point at the Newton Heath branch. Also pictured are Alan Donnelly, Peter Grant and Colin Smith

Three-in-one open Manchester meeting

A special open meeting, hosted by Longsight, Piccadilly No1 and Newton Heath branches, welcomed Mick Whelan, the new ASLEF General Secretary, to the Waldorf Hotel outside Manchester Piccadilly Station on 18 January.

District Organiser Colin Smith opened proceedings touching on issues such as refranchising, the McNulty report and union activists abroad being shot for simply carrying out their role as union officials. A representative from Thompsons solicitors emphasised his company's benefits for ASLEF members before the General Secretary spoke on a wide range of topics including raising ASLEF's profile, preparation for the consequences of the McNulty report, recent court battles fought regarding the legality of strike action and the need to build bridges with sister trade unions to face the challenges which undoubtedly lie ahead. Also high on the General Secretary's agenda is the need to respond to the 'race to the

bottom' mentality being adopted by the media and certain sections of the public when the topic of train drivers' pay and conditions is raised, as well as the need for recognition of the train driver's role.

He concluded by expressing his disappointment at branches not taking the opportunity to get more items onto the agenda onto this year's AAD which is taking place in Liverpool.

A brief question and answer session was held with the drivers, who work for Northern, First Transpennine and Virgin Trains. Topics included driver vacancies, rest day working and branch visits while the ASLEF President, Alan Donnelly, discussed issues with regards to freight.

After the formal proceedings came to a close we retired downstairs for refreshments and to enjoy the free feast provided; all in all, a most enjoyable evening!

**Steve Hill, Reporter,
Newton Heath branch**



Martin is off to Devon after 17 years underground!

West Brompton bids farewell to Martin

The union's West Brompton Branch (LUL District Line) has bid a fond farewell to a popular member, Brother Martin Sewell. Martin retired after 17 years on the Underground, mostly spent at Earls Court.

He started out as a direct recruit guard based on the

Northern Line at Morden, soon becoming a Guard Motorman. In 1997 he transferred to the District Line depot at Parson Green. Not long afterwards the depot moved to Earls Court.

Martin had three leaving functions: and it's a tribute to him that they were all

well attended and everyone enjoyed them.

Terry Wilkinson from the union's Executive Committee presented Martin with a retirement certificate from the union and a gold engraved watch from members of the branch.

We all wish Martin all the very best as he moves to Brixham in South Devon. He said to tell everyone who knows him that if they want to visit, he will be only too pleased to see them.

Good luck to you, Martin!
**Greg Tasker, Secretary,
West Brompton branch**

Upcoming events

○ NORWICH REUNION 13 APRIL:

The Norwich Retired Members Section will be holding its reunion on Friday 13 April at the Arkwright Club in Hall Road Norwich from 19:30 until 23:00. Free bar and buffet. All retired members who worked at the Norwich depot at any time in their careers are welcome. Selected guests from other depots will also be invited. For further information contact John Pipe.

○ DIDCOT 5 MAY:

The Didcot ASLEF reunion will be held on Saturday 5 May from noon at the Rail Staff club in Didcot. Retired, present and associates welcome.

○ BRIGHTON 8 MAY:

The Brighton Motive Power and Sussex Motive Power depots will be holding an informal open afternoon for all active and retired ASLEF members who have been connected to Brighton and Sussex Motive Power Depots in the Brighton Railway Club, Belmont (off Dyke Road) from 14:00 on Tuesday 8 May. A buffet will be provided. Any ASLEF member who has had a connection with Brighton or Sussex Motive Power Depots (Ore, Eastbourne, Seaford, Newhaven, Brighton, West Worthing, Littlehampton, Barnham, Bognor Regis, Horsham, Three Bridges and Tunbridge Wells West) is welcome to come along and meet with their old footplate colleagues. For further information phone Ivan Wilson (07949862393) or Paul Edwards (07894602991)

○ ALDERSBROOK ILFORD:

A reunion will be held in Peterborough on Friday 18 May for all ex 'lads' from Aldersbrook Hostel, Ilford. Full details from Malcolm Bell (01733-569507 or email fletton.brick@btopenworld.com)

○ YOKER 26 MAY:

The Yoker branch celebrates its quarter century with a dinner dance on Saturday 26 May at the Goodyear Social Club in Downchapel, Glasgow. For information contact Alan Reid (07706 551 258) or Derrick Lowrie (07507 895 336).

○ OLD OAK COMMON 23 JUNE

Meet-up for ex 1972 81A era Drivers/Secondmen at Reading - pub outside the station down the main side from 12:00 on Saturday 23 June. For more details contact Bob Dorkings of the Barnham Branch at rdorkings@yahoo.com



These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the **ASLEF Journal at 75-77 St John Street London, EC1M 4NN** or by email to **journal@aslef.org.uk**. Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can. This month we continue our **STAR LETTER** feature. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!

Labour faithful!

Most of pages 10 and 11 of February's Journal were devoted to our union's continued blind faith in supporting new Labour. Surely the recent statement from shadow transport minister Maria Eagle to support cuts of £6bn from the transport budget destroys any trust that the union should have in Labour?

By supporting cuts of £528m at Network Rail, £245m from Crossrail and £1.73bn slashed from the Transport for London budgets, she is promising to implement policies that are inherently Tory - and that directly attack ASLEF's own policies and its membership's best interests.

Nor is there a hint from Ms Eagle of the much needed re-nationalisation of the rail industry that would save billions, something our union has long been campaigning for.

If any ASLEF member really believes that the interests of the union and its membership is best served by continued support for Labour, then Ms Eagle's commitment to continue swinging Tory cuts must shatter that illusion. Why on earth would any trade union not only bankroll, but urge its membership to support, such a party?

It's time ASLEF grew up politically, and sent the Labour party packing.

John Metcalfe, Driver, Carlisle

Petition for boxes

I am a non-safeguarded train driver and I have set up an e-petition which I hope all rail staff of every grade will sign.

It is regarding the re-introduction of staff travel boxes for all non-safeguarded railway staff to fall in line with the rest of Europe. At the moment we can go and travel free in Europe (as can continental European drivers). But in our own country, they can travel free when we have to pay!!

To see the petition you can Google e-petitions, click on HM Government petitions, type in 'railway staff travel' and view the petition which is under the name of my wife, Natalie Anderson, or the link is <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/17508>. It reads:

'The restoration of staff travel boxes for all non-safeguarded railway staff, after

PARENT DRIVERS CAN'T CHOOSE SUMMER HOLIDAYS

There were news reports recently regarding the Department of Education banning the removal of children from schools for holidays. This has not been thought through for drivers who are told when they take their holiday by the TOC or FOC they work for.

In view of this I wrote to the department regarding drivers (and others) who have rostered annual leave. I said that I understand the laudable reasons for this, but that it didn't take into account the impact on parents who work in essential industries or health or emergency or armed forces situations with 'minimum cover' requirements where holidays

cannot be chosen by the employee.

As a train driver, my two week summer holiday is allocated to me in one of eight two week periods - only three of which fall in the summer holidays. This means that my children can experience a family holiday for only six of their first sixteen years if we are not allowed to take them out of school at other times.

The principle of rostered annual leave in essential services is often overlooked. The Department of Education needs to incorporate special provisions where a need can be proved.
Dave Purvis, Eastleigh

completion of 11 years continuous service to exceed retirement. To fall in line with the rest of European staff travel.'

The 11 years' continuous service is for loyalty to the railway industry, one year's probation and ten year's loyalty.
Dean Anderson, Caterham

Unworthy Knight

On Wednesday 29 February the rail industry should have hung its head in shame. I felt sick to the pit of my stomach when, on the very same day that Network admitted responsibility for the disaster at Grayrigg, its former Chief Executive, John Armitt, was accepting a knighthood from one of those people from the Royal Family in Buckingham Palace (the big house in London that we allow them to live in).

The words 'insensitive', 'misguided' and 'arrogant' are a few that spring to mind and can be printed. 85-year-old Margaret Mason lost her life in the Grayrigg crash and one of our own fraternity, Brother Iain Black, was seriously injured.

Whilst a coalition government attempts to tear away our rights for safety and water down

regulations, the former Chief Executive of Network Rail is being honoured for his 'services to engineering'. How stupid do these people think we are? In fact, why doesn't the establishment go all the way in this debacle and award honours to Robert Mugabe and Bashar al-Assad for 'services to human rights'?

Whilst John Armitt was down on one knee, lawyers for Network Rail were at Lancaster Magistrates Court accepting responsibility for breaches of health and safety law in relation to the Grayrigg disaster. I hope none of the blood on Mr Armitt's hands soiled the carpets of the Palace. And I'd like to think while she was knighting him, the Queen might have asked, 'How does one sleep at night, John?'

Fred 'the Shred' Goodwin had his knighthood stripped off him for plundering the economy. Armitt should have his revoked too.

Alan Moss, Safety Rep, Longsight Branch

Farewell 'Angel' Andy

I was shocked and saddened to hear of the loss of Andy Morrison and I can only echo all the tributes that have been made in

ordinary conversation by everyone I have talked to, as well as the moving tributes made at his funeral.

I met Andy when, 20 years my junior, he was a young long-haired lad on Parkeston LDC. He turned up to a Sectional Council meeting in London with another lad with a similar hair-style, Eddie Mann. They were introduced to the Norwich LDC by Charlie Howlett, their stalwart chairman – and were immediately dubbed 'Charlie's Angels'!

They were both destined for much higher achievements, Andy through ASLEF and Eddie in a management career.

It is a terrible shame that Andy's dedication and hard graft were so abruptly ended and deprived him of the time to enjoy a well-deserved retirement.

May he rest in peace.

John Pipe, Retired Members Section, Norwich

Jim did a fine education job

The members of Dundee Branch would like to thank Jim Baxter for all the great work he did during the five years he held the position of ASLEF Education's Project Manager in Scotland.

He was a great help to our Learner Rep Colin McAteer and several members have benefitted from the courses he helped to organise.

These included not only current members of staff, but also retired members and their

families.

We would like to wish Jim all the best on his return to driving trains.

Graeme Wilson, Secretary, Dundee branch

Remembering Andy in Ipswich

We held a minute's silence for Andy Morrison at our last Ipswich branch meeting and thought we should record our thoughts about him. In his many years as an ASLEF stalwart Andy built up a wealth of knowledge and experience he was able to use to good effect, whether in disciplinary hearings, dealing with management or addressing union members.

Whenever you met Andy you always felt a sense of reassurance from his calm demeanour and friendly smile: he was 'one of the blokes' and he was on your side. He always put you at ease with a joke here and a tale there.

He wasn't only held in high regard by union members: management would receive and listen to him attentively, an indication of the esteem in which he was held.

It goes without saying that he will be missed. But rather than end on a sad note, it would be best to remember him with a fag in his hand and a grin on his face. He was a man always there to help.

C. Leeks, Secretary, Ipswich branch

HEALTH AND SAFETY

MANCHESTER DAY OF ACTION – SATURDAY 28 APRIL

International Workers Memorial Day is on 28 April and although the TUC usually calls for it to be marked by activity in the workplace, as it falls on a weekend this year - we are taking to the streets!

We are calling on ASLEF members to bring banners to an event in Manchester leaving the crossroads of Corporation Street and Miller Street (just behind Victoria station) at noon and marching to Albert Square.

For further information contact Colin Smith (07977 142460) or Alan Moss (07917 063665).

For other WMD events around the country, visit the TUC's website (www.tuc.org.uk)

Trans-Atlantic call

I am a retired locomotive engineer who worked on Conrail in New England. I ran freight and passenger services over the Berkshire (Massachusetts) MTNs and I worked off the spare board working pushers, local freight and yard work. I also worked out of Selkirk yards in NY.

I belong to the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen and I'd love to be in touch with members of your union. My email is BLE752@AOL.COM

Paul Martin, Florida, USA

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Skenfrith Mews, Celtic Horizons, Newport, NP10 8HF, 07811761656.



WOKING HOMES BADGE to raise money for this excellent charity and home for retired rail staff. Badges are £3 each plus £1 for postage on any order. Please make cheques payable to Woking Homes and send cheques to Woking Homes, Oriental Road, Woking, Surrey, GU22 7BE



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FAVERSHAM BRANCH (077) has finally launched its 25th Anniversary ASLEF/NUM badge. They cost £10 each including P&P. A few Faversham Branch Centenary badges remain available at £5 each including P&P. To order please contact the Branch Secretary, Steve Gurdler, 18 Hunters Way West, Chatham, Kent ME5 7HL. steve.gurdler@aslefonline.co.uk or 07941 110473

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Further information or orders to Colin Dawson 01689 849 543 or 22 Hutchison Road, New Addington, Croydon, Surrey CR0 0BD.

Railway maps are 'things of useful beauty'

THE author of 'Great Railway Maps of the World', Mark Ovenden, is a railway enthusiast, although when you see his bouncing energy, you suspect that he is enthusiastic about most things in his life. Last year his beautifully produced book on 'Great Railway Maps of the World' was published and he shamelessly labels himself a 'spotter'. But there the stereotype ends. Just listening to what he's done in his life is exhausting.

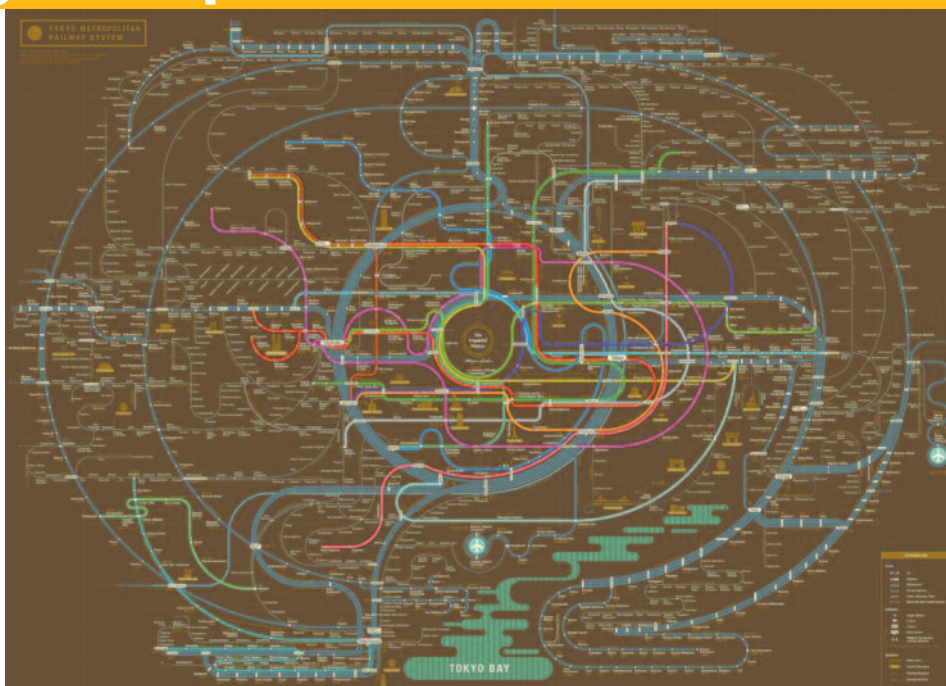
He's been interested in media and trains since he was a child and in his early teens he presented a weekly show on his local hospital radio station. At Art College in Southampton he started a listing magazine before going on to work for BBC 1 and KissFM radio stations.

He became active politically during the miners' strike of 1984/5, which led him to work for Manchester City Council delivering training on tackling homophobia in the workplace. The BBC radio programme he began - 'loud'n'proud' - reflected his increasing involvement with gay rights activism. He also worked on BBC2's 'Gaytime TV' and after various jobs producing radio programmes he helped set up the Ministry of Sound's DAB Digital Radio station.

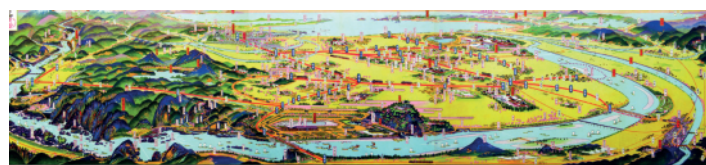
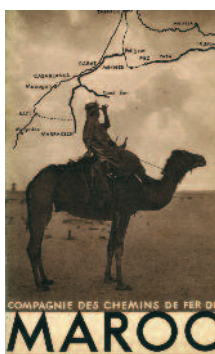
But his life-long interest in railways— he collected old train maps and explored closed lines as a child – led to another creative direction and in 2003 he compiled a book of 'Metro Maps of The World' that sold out in a few weeks. He followed that up with a book on the Paris Metro – and his latest venture is 'Great Railway Maps of the World'. It's a stunning piece of work.

For one thing, it tells a totally unexpected story right from the first page where a satellite picture of the world reveals something that seems quite odd. There are the conurbations you expect to see, but they are linked by straight lines. You might assume that these are roads – but they are not: their origins are railway lines. Even America where the car is king, the lines linking cities reflect the way that the railways spread across the continent. It is quite a revelation to discover how important rail has been to the way countries have developed. As Mark says, 'Rails shaped continents'.

It's also a treasure trove of information about rail, including its roots which Mark traces back to 600 BC! He sees the first 'railway' as an 8- kilometre 'Rutway' the ancient Greeks used on the Isthmus of Corinth for moving ships over land, a few thousand years before the 'Railway Age' began in the early 1800s. But the book is full of surprising information, like Cuba having a railway in 1837 and Jamaica in



This is Mark's favourite image: bright, practical, balanced and quite beautiful. CREDIT: Kim Ji-hwan, zeroperzero.com



An extraordinary 1930's image map of Moroccan railways. CREDIT: The Mike Ashworth Collection, London

1845. He points out how the development of the railways sculpted our lives, arguing that time zones are a by-product, becoming necessary as people moved over long distances quickly: trains would be missed if 'local time' was different at the originating station.

Mark is also fascinated in the sheer beauty of some of these maps - his own visual favourite being that of the Tokyo system. He told us, 'ZeroPerZero's Tokyo regional rail map is a new take on diagrammaticisation; gone are the Beck-ian 45 degree angles, instead there are graceful concentric curves. Having never had the pleasure of visiting this dynamic part of the world I've no idea how practical this is as a way of finding your way through the maze of lines – but it sure looks pretty!'

He predicts that in the near future railway maps will go onto apps and sticks and become interactive, but he adds that, 'These images will always be there, as things of useful beauty.'

It's a splendid phrase, because it is easy to keep turning these pages and simply enjoy their patterned colour without even thinking of the world that railways help us to cross. But when you do, it is astonishing to realise what a huge influence rail has had on our planet, from Armenia to Turkmenistan, from Japan to Estonia. You realise that the phrase 'The end of the line' is utterly misleading. There is no end

This is an example of exquisite 1928 Japanese cartography. CREDIT: Library of Congress



This is another of the author's favourites in the way it effectively denies the existence of West Berlin! CREDIT: BVG

of the line, just as there seems no end to the variety of styles that railway cartographers employ, from the formal and practical to the wonderfully ostentatious Japanese offerings from the early 1900s.

This is a book that combines learning and pleasure, information and entertainment. It's a treasure.

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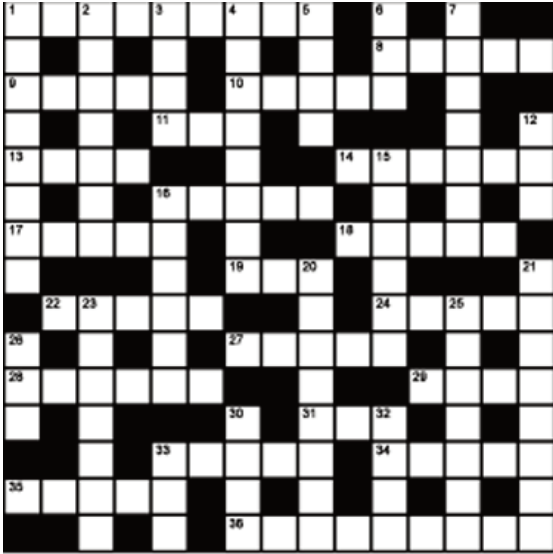
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Prize Crossword No. 72 set by Zebedee



Solution to Crossword No 71 which appeared in the March 2012 edition of the ASLEF Journal.
Congratulations to **Owen Price** from **Farnborough**

Across: 1 Reggae, 4 Lollipop, 10 Verdigris, 11 Tutor, 12 Nylon, 13 Pistachio, 14 Dancer, 16 Algeria, 18 Library, 20 Hockey, 23 Therefore, 25 Fleet, 26 Arise, 27 Brilliant, 28 Eternity, 29 Needle. **Down:** 1 Ravine, 2 Gorilla, 3 Alien, 5 Oasis, 6 Lethargic, 7 Pitcher, 8 Personal, 9 Property, 15 Chameleon, 16 Athletic, 17 Flatmate, 19 Beehive, 21 Emerald, 22 Statue, 24 Orbit, 25 False

Across

- 1 Express in speech (9)
8 Wanderer just not made to stop early (5)
9 More to be included in the next race at (5)
10 Examine so as to determine condition (5)
11 Grass in seaside resort (3)
13 A cross is put on the line (4)
14 Fall abruptly (6)
16 Something of value (5)
17 Found pleasant or attractive (5)
18 Slept lightly (5)
19 Put, for a moment, into liquid (3)
22 Soft and strokeable (5)
24 Type of large predatory bird (5)
27 Regal pop group unlikely to abdicate (5)
28 One of those covered areas that are receptive to a rotter (6)
29 Best option (4)

31 Just a drop in the ocean (3)

- 33 "Wonder ____" (played by Diana Prince) (5)
34 Having no head for bridge could be bluff (5)
35 A plait of hair worn at the back of the head (5)
36 Undisturbed sleep (9)

Down

- 1 Worthy of being watched (8)
2 Change one's mind (7)
3 Just open a grate (4)
4 Angered at something unjust or wrong (8)
5 Equal in an unfinished event (4)
6 It's kept in a pen (3)
7 Advance beyond the usual limit (7)
12 A city in north central Morocco; a religious centre (3)
15 Look at nose after operation and relax (6)

16 Worshipped bustle and colour (6)

- 20 The act of giving a false appearance (8)
21 Characterized by careless unconcern (8)
23 Make a show of taking your hat off (7)
25 Cooking utensil consisting of a flat heated surface (7)
26 Practice music in a small group (slang) (3)
30 In the middle of a motorway, driver's first (4)
32 The edge of a hat (4)
33 A source of information on spiders? (3)



The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

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Thanks for all your responses to the 71st ASLEF crossword in the March edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 75-77 St John Street, London EC1M 4NN by the 14th of the issue month.

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